

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Please cancel claims 1-30 and add new claims 31-43, such that the status of the claims is as follows:

1-30. (Canceled)

31. (New) A method of stimulating the endogenous defense mechanisms of a perishable product against microbial attack for a period of effective defense comprising the steps of:

- a) arranging perishable products in a matrix within a substantially closed environment;
- b) exposing the perishable products to a gaseous mixture of air and ozone at a prescribed concentration for a period of exposure, the prescribed ozone concentration being a selected concentration in the range of around fifty to five hundred parts per billion (ppb) by volume in air; and
- c) removing the products from the substantially closed environment after the period of exposure;

wherein the period of effective defense against microbial attack resulting from ozone exposure during the period of exposure is between two and five hundred hours.

32. (New) A method as claimed in Claim 31, wherein the period of exposure resulting in effective defense against microbial attack of perishable produce is between around two and around five hundred hours.
33. (New) A method as claimed in Claim 31, wherein the period of effective defense is between two and eight hours.
34. (New) A method as claimed in Claim 31, wherein the prescribed concentration is in the range of around fifty to around two hundred ppb by volume.
35. (New) A method as claimed in Claim 34, wherein the prescribed concentration is in the range of around fifty to around one hundred ppb by volume.
36. (New) A method according to Claim 31, wherein the prescribed concentration is fifty or one hundred or two hundred or five hundred ppb by volume.
37. (New) A method according to Claim 31, comprising the further step of maintaining the relative humidity in the enclosed environment at around ninety five percent.
38. (New) A method according to Claim 31, comprising the further step of maintaining the temperature in the enclosed environment at four to thirteen degrees C.

39. (New) A method according to Claim 31, wherein the substantially closed environment consists of a crop store, a warehouse, or a freight transport container.
40. (New) Apparatus for performing the method of Claim 1, comprising an ozone generator, an ozone sensor and a controller, wherein generated ozone is released into the environment until the prescribed ozone concentration is reached, and wherein the ozone sensor measures the concentration of ozone in the environment, and when the measured concentration of ozone falls below the prescribed ozone concentration the controller commands the ozone generator to release ozone into the environment, so as to maintain continuously the ozone concentration in the environment substantially at the prescribed concentration.
41. (New) Apparatus according to Claim 40, wherein ozone is released into the environment by the ozone generator via a plurality of inlets.
42. (New) Apparatus according to Claim 40, comprising a plurality of ozone sensors.
43. (New) Apparatus according to Claim 40, wherein the controller includes computer software, the software including a model representative of the of gaseous fluid behavior in the environment, and wherein ozone is released into the environment according to the concentration of ozone measured by the or each sensor, and the gaseous fluid behavior model.